

## One Last Step to Create the Alameda National Wildlife Refuge: Your Letter Will Help Make the Refuge a Reality

**W**e and the California Least Tern are almost there. The Least Tern's home in Alameda is about to be officially established as the Alameda National Wildlife Refuge, which will be managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service).

Before that can occur, however, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires the Service to publish an environmental evaluation, called an "Environmental Assessment," of the creation of the Refuge. This document describes

the proposed Refuge and how the Service proposes to manage the Refuge. NEPA also requires the Service to consider several different management alternatives.

We are strongly supportive of the Service's preferred management alternative (with a few corrections—see below). We are not at all in favor of the other alternatives proposed by the Service, and we need your help to ensure that the Service chooses the best alternative.

So please take a few minutes to dash off a short letter to the Service urging them to adopt Alternative C, the preferred alternative. Your letter must reach the Service by February 16, 1999. You can also e-mail them (see below).

Under Alternative C, the Refuge will be fenced in by 8-ft fences to prevent human and animal intrusion. Least Terns are shy birds, and people running, or even walking, around the nesting site could create havoc, as would stray dogs or cats.

Under Alternative C, new nesting habitat for the Least Terns will be developed to double the colony's population.

The waters around the Refuge that are used for feeding by the Least Terns and that provide habitat for tens of thousands of waterfowl will be off limits to boaters, except for an access channel to a proposed marina site outside Refuge boundaries.

Predator control will be instituted. Predators, both avian and mammalian, are the biggest threat to the Least Tern. Humane trapping will be implemented. Whenever possible, animals will be relocated.

### Bad News for Strybing Arboretum Quail

A sobering finding at the San Francisco Christmas Bird Count on December 29, 1998, was an extremely low count of 16 California Quail in Strybing Arboretum. This is down from a fairly stable population of 40. Not coincidentally, a new cat feeding station has become established near where the quail live. Strybing Arboretum has the last remaining population of quail in Golden Gate Park. President Alan Hopkins is investigating this new development, but it doesn't look good for the continuing existence of our beloved state bird in the City. }

*Continued on page 6*



## Field Trips Calendar

**G**AS field trips are conducted by experienced birders who wish to share their knowledge and love of birds with others. All trips are free of charge (except for entrance fees that may be charged by regional, state, or national parks) and are open to everyone, regardless of membership in the National Audubon Society or Golden Gate chapter.

### **SUNDAY, JANUARY 31, LAKE MERRITT, OAKLAND**

See January Gull for details.  
Leader: Joan Zawaski (415) 621-2424 day; (510) 530-2427 eve. (\*)

### **SUNDAY, JANUARY 31, WOODBRIIDGE ROAD ECOLOGICAL PRESERVE AND AREA, SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY**

See January Gull for details.  
Leader: Jim Rowoth (209) 462-7512; e-mail: TLALOC27@aol.com.

### **SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6, PANOCHIE VALLEY**

See January Gull for details.  
Leader: Chris Carpenter (510) 569-9281 day, (510) 547-2201 eve.

### **FEBRUARY 7, MERCED NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE AND AREA**

See January Gull for details.  
Leader: Don Schmoldt (510) 215-1910.

### **SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7, STRYBING ARBORETUM**

See January Gull for details.  
Leaders: Allan Ridley and Helen McKenna (415) 566-3241.

### **WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, MINI-TRIP TO COYOTE HILLS REGIONAL PARK**

See January Gull for details.  
Leaders: Anna Wilcox (510) 351-9301 & Jean-Marie Spoelman. (\$) (\*)

### **SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14, GRIZZLY AND JOICE ISLANDS, SOLANO COUNTY**

See January Gull for details.  
Leader: Robin Leong (707) 643-1287.

### **SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21, LAS GALLINAS SEWAGE TREATMENT PONDS, MARIN COUNTY**

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the parking lot. Take Hwy 101 north and exit at the Lucas Valley Drive/Smith Ranch Road off ramp. Go east on Smith Ranch Road to the end. Take a sharp left to the sewage treatment ponds, just before the county park. Drive past the headquarters to the parking lot on the left. We will see wintering ducks and shorebirds, keeping in mind that anything can show up. Trip will end at noon. Beginners welcome. Leader: Mark Eaton (415) 566-6767; e-mail: eaton@best.com.

### **SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, MCLAREN PARK & CANDLESTICK POINT, SAN FRANCISCO**

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at McLaren Park at the intersection of Cambridge and John F. Shelley Drive. To reach McLaren, exit Hwy 101 at Silver Ave. Go west on Silver to Cambridge. Turn left onto Cambridge. We should see Bewick's Wren, Western Meadowlark, and other "common" birds we don't often see in the City. We will then caravan to Candlestick Point Recreation Area where there will be ducks, shorebirds, and possibly Peregrine Falcon. Leader: Alan Hopkins (415) 664-0983. (\*)

### **SUNDAY, MARCH 7, STRYBING ARBORETUM**

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the front gate of the Arboretum (9th Ave. and Lincoln Way) for this regular 1st Sunday of the month half-day trip. The Strybing Arboretum is a delightful section of Golden Gate Park, with several "microhabitats" attracting a varied array of resident, migrant, and vagrant birds. Beginners and all others welcome. Leaders: Allan Ridley and Helen McKenna (415) 566-3241.

### **WEDNESDAY MARCH 10, MINI-TRIP TO MITCHELL CANYON**

Meet at 9:30 a.m. Take Hwy 24 through the Caldecott Tunnel. At Walnut Creek, take the Ygnacio Valley Rd. exit. Go approximately



## Workday at Alameda Point

8 miles, then turn right onto Clayton Rd. Go 1 mile, make a right onto Mitchell Canyon Rd., and proceed to the parking lot at the end of the road. (Parking outside the entrance will avoid a parking fee.) This is a delightful area with easy streamside walking and many songbirds. Wear shoes suitable for walking in mud and bring your lunch. Rain cancels trip. Leaders: Anna Wilcox

(510) 351-9301 and Jean-Marie Spoelman. (\$)

### **SATURDAY MARCH 27, SAN FRANCISCO BIRD BLITZ**

In this annual blitz, we expect to tally over 100 different species within the City limits. For this year's mad dash, we look to exceed all previous records and will begin at 7 a.m. sharp. Meet at the north end of Van Ness Ave. (past North Point—the last cross-street) at the foot of Municipal Pier. From there, we will caravan to other sites, including Golden Gate Park, Sutro Baths, Lake Merced, and Candlestick Point. Bring lunch and liquids. We will bird until dusk, then adjourn to a restaurant for dinner to recap the day's observations. Leader: Alan Hopkins (415) 664-0983. (\*)

### **FRIDAY APRIL 30 – SUNDAY MAY 2, PALM SPRINGS, MT. SAN JACINTO, AND MORONGO VALLEY**

This 3-day southern California trip for GGAS members is by reservation only and will be lim-

The November 21 workday at the Alameda Wildlife Refuge was a blissfully gray day with no wind, making it easier for the laborers, who soon became adept at pulling stubborn weeds from cracks in the tarmac. "We miss the Navy," biologist Laura Collins called out, as its retreat from care and maintenance becomes more and more obvious. Until the U.S. Fish and Wildlife's management plan is in place, refuge volunteers will play a necessary role in this maintenance. "We need more volunteers to be involved," answered GGAS's own board member, Leora Feeney, as she observed Mike Richter tugging at a stalk, much to the consternation of a Loggerhead Shrike who had staked out a territory there. Reward to these stalwart workers came in the form of a cake from Laura, decorated to make the First Anniversary in the life of a wildlife sanctuary-to-be.

Please call our office at Alameda College with your questions for Dana Kokubun, our pro-

gram director, at 510-435-9792 and watch *The Gull* for an announcement of our annual trip to Año Nuevo. }

ited to 20 participants, including leaders. A detailed itinerary will be mailed to participants at a later date. However, reservations on a flight to Ontario Airport are recommended ASAP. Vanpooling from Ontario Airport is a possibility. Contact Rusty Scalf at (510) 666-9936 or rscalf@jps.net to sign up or if you have questions. Contact Lillian Fujii at (510) 236-4167 or steveandlil@worldnet.att.net to sign up. }

### **Bird Seed Available**

Oops! We missed the deadline for the bird seed sale. But we *have* ordered bird seed, and it is available for sale in the office—along with some feeders, attractive 1999 engagement calendars, checklists, etc. Stop by the office (but do call first!) for your new supply of the finest quality bird seed. Sorry we don't have the prices yet as the Gull goes to press, but friendly volunteers will be happy to quote them to you. }

gram director, at 510-435-9792 and watch *The Gull* for an announcement of our annual trip to Año Nuevo. }

Trips marked with a (\$) go to parks or other sites which require an entrance fee. Carpooling arrangements will be attempted by leader for trips marked with a (\*). Problems, etc.: If you need a ride or can take a passenger (even if a trip is not marked with an (\*), if you need information and have difficulty reaching a field trip leader, if you have suggestions for trips, or if you are interested in leading a trip, call Lillian Fujii (510) 236-4167, Field Trips Committee Chair.



Now you see them, now you don't! The large flock of White Pelicans seemingly disappeared at regular intervals as they circumscribed huge circles in the brilliant blue sky above Bodega Bay. Magically, they would reappear further away. The 3 smaller young ones among the 20 adults were confused. They hadn't yet mastered the knack or rhythm of these maneuvers. I watched until they were mere specks on the horizon—such a breathtaking and memorable sight!

We enjoy the spectacle of White Pelicans in wintertime around here. They nest in scattered colonies on inland lakes in various states. They are among our largest birds, with a wing span of up to 9-1/2 ft. Their cousins, Brown Pelicans, are a bit smaller, around 10 lb on 6- to 7-1/2-ft wingspans. Both have that prehistoric look while flying, heads tucked back on their shoulders, taking slow, measured wing beats. Flap, flap, flap, glide. Pelicans are fabulous flyers, soaring at times at high altitudes. They also fly in formations, sometimes V-shaped like geese. More often, I see the browns in a line flying low, skimming the crests of waves. When the leader tires, he falls to the back of the line.

Pelicans are sociable with their own kind, but don't disturb 1, or it will vomit, lightening its load for a quick escape—a smelly surprise you don't want. They thrive on fish that commercial fishermen don't want, called "rough" fish. Such large birds require as

much as 4 lb of food daily so it's a good thing they are not in competition with the fishermen.

"A wonderful bird is a pelican; His bill will hold more than his belican." So goes Merritt's famous limerick, and it's true. That famous pouch suspended from the lower half of the pelican's long, straight bill, holds 2 to 3 gallons of water, hopefully with fish in it, too. The bird squeezes the water out, then swallows the fish. Besides acting as a net to catch fish, the pouch can be pulsed in extreme heat to help the bird cool down.

Methods for fishing are different for the 2 birds. White Pelicans glide quietly in cooperative groups in a semicircle facing shore. Then, with flapping wings and much splashing, they drive the fish to shallow water where they are caught. Brown Pelicans spot their dinner from the air. Then they cock their wings into an "S" shape, tuck them next to their bodies, and sometimes plunge as much as 70 ft, hitting the water at up to 30 mph. This would be like a person diving off a 30-ft cliff. Most birds wouldn't survive the impact, but a Brown Pelican is built for head-on crashes into water. Its breastbone is fused to surrounding bones, and the entire skeleton is packed in a layer of air sacs—like being wrapped in "bubble wrap." When its bill hits the water, the pouch explodes open—breaking the fall—and it collects a mouthful of water and fish, too, it is hoped. A Brown Pelican is much like a kamikaze pilot!

When pelicans are on land, they are clumsy, but manage to carry themselves with some dignity as they waddle about on their short legs. Put them in water, however, and they bounce buoyantly atop waves because of the air sacs in their bones and under their skin. Their large webbed feet propel them strongly through the water. They have a tough time getting airborne without wind to help the takeoff, so they run over the water, beating their big wings and then pounding the surface with both feet in unison. It must take a lot of energy to do this!

Adult pelicans make few sounds, but have been heard to grunt like pigs while their young have been heard screaming or hissing. But they must communicate somehow because they are a gregarious bird.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the use of DDT affected the eggshells of the Brown Pelican along with Peregrine Falcons, Bald Eagles, and other birds. Brown Pelicans were placed on the endangered list and have made some recovery in numbers. They are, however, still considered "threatened." White Pelicans have also been affected by DDT, but not as severely. Loss of habitat, however—eg, lakes being drained—has affected their numbers.

Pelicans have been on earth for at least 25 million years, and I hope they will be here for eons more to entertain, amuse, and dazzle us with their unique qualities.



# Gifts and Bequests

## Least Tern Circle

(\$200 or more)

Travis Hails, Alan Harper, I. von der Hude, David & Cecily Majerus, Steven & Renee Margolin, Maggie & Contee Seely, Charles & Muriel Sonne

## Clapper Rail Circle

(\$100 or more)

Cornelia Foster, Linda Hoagland & Harvey Tucker in honor of Jeffrey Tucker & Bridget O'Rourke and Naomi Tucker & Wendy Hussey, Jane & Michael Larkin, Jill Moak, Rudolph & Eugenie Pipa, Victoria Whitman, Margaret Godley Zeff

## In Memoriam

Sandra Jacobi in memory of E. Stephen Massoty, Muriel Sonne in memory of Elsie Prislín

## Gifts (under \$100)

Roger & Mia Alexander, Clara Arakaki, Neil & Christina Bartlett, Bob Battagin, Thomas Beach & Barbara Peterson, John & Elsie Becker, George & Virginia Bing, Kay Bloom, Robert & Nancy Brewer, George Carmignani, John Carson Jr., Robert Connick, Lauretta Cuadra, Cira Curri, George & Kathryn Eddy, Phoebe & John Felker, Dorothy Field, L. H. Fitzgerald, MD, Dorothy Frantz, Leslie Friedman, Robert & Linda Fries, Richard Gale, Eugene & Phyllis Gottfried, Harriett Graham, Jim & Ruth Gravanis, Madelon Halpern for the Bird Box, Lola J. Harris, Totton & Joanne Heffelfinger, Jack & Mae

Hoag, Robert Hodas, Keith Horrocks, David Hudson & Dana Kokubun, Norman & Florence Kimball, Patricia Kline, Carol Ann Kuelper, Janice Hale Levin, Brent Malarkey, Robert & Mary Mayer, Miles McKey, Charlotte Nolan, Bob & Dorothy O'Brien, Malcolm Ohl, Robert & Esther Oswalt, Vivian & Fay Pon, Mauricia Price, Jean Puffer, Catherine Purchis, Anne & Duston Richards, Betti Roberts-Collins, William Rosenthal, PhD, Miriam Rothschild, Russell Scalf, Adrienne Scroggie, Richard Sproul, Jack Stewart, Madeline Tank & Helen Trimborn, Susan Watson, Carolyn Jones Weinbeyer, Diane Wilson

The Society Welcomes gifts in general or gifts in honor of or in memory of relatives and friends. Such gifts will be used as specified by the donor or, if unspecified, at the discretion of the GGAS Board of Directors. This includes their use of general GGAS activities of for special programs of the Society. Please send your gift in the form of a check made out to Golden Gate Audubon Society, 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G, Berkeley, CA 94702. All gifts are tax deductible. The Society is also appreciative of any bequests. Such bequests should specify as recipient the Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. All gifts, donations and bequests will be acknowledged in *The Gull*, as well as personally on behalf of the Society by the Secretary.

## Great Big Thanks!

Thank you to all of our wonderful members who sent us checks this month. Your generosity is truly heartening. One of our favorite comments was from a donor who sent us a gift of \$300:

"I return all CA Refund Value cans and bottles for cash. I have been accumulating this for 2 years and wish to donate it . . . for any purpose you see fit." Just as every journey begins with just 1 step, every donation can begin with just 1 can!



# Your letter is needed by February

*Continued from page 1*

Public access will, in general, be limited to an exterior levee pathway. However, environmental education programs will be developed, and there will be guided interpretive tours during the Least Tern nesting season. A Wildlife Interpretive Center may be created, if possible.

The other alternatives either propose essentially no management for the Refuge or else allow for too much human access to the waters around the Refuge, which would result in substantial disturbance of the wildlife found there, including the Brown Pelican, the Least Tern, and thousands of waterfowl. None of these alternatives are satisfactory.

Alternative C, on the other hand, is essentially a wonderful program. A few things could be made more clear, however:

On the southwest side of the Refuge is located the "West Wetland," which is the site of a large Caspian Tern breeding colony. Directly adjacent to this wetland is a contaminated landfill. This landfill is the only site on the Refuge that is suitable for significant wetland restoration or creation. Such restoration would substantially enhance the Caspian Tern nesting habitat.

The Navy does not currently propose to remove the contaminants found in the landfill. Rather, we understand that the Navy proposes to simply put a

cap over the contaminants. (Capping means to place a 1- or 2-ft layer of what is essentially mud over the contaminants.) This is a really bad idea. For one thing, it eliminates all hope of restoring wetland on the site, and second, the levees surrounding the Refuge are not in the best of shape. If, or when, our next really bad seismic event takes place, the levee could fail and all of those contaminants, even if capped, would be released into the Bay.

## **Alternative C, on the other hand, is essentially a wonderful program.**

Please tell the Service that they must insist that the Navy remove all the contaminants and that Alternative C should specifically state that the creation or restoration of wetlands will take place at the West Wetland and adjacent landfill unless it would threaten the Least Tern colony by bringing predators too close to the Least Tern nesting site.

Also, ask the Service to make it

clear that they will patrol the waters surrounding the Refuge and especially Breakwater Island. Breakwater Island provides the only night-roosting site in the Bay for the California Brown Pelican, which is extremely sensitive to human disturbance. The Service needs to have boat patrols available to keep people and animals off Breakwater Island.

Finally, the Environmental Assessment favorably mentions Golden Gate Audubon Society, our Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge (FAWR) Committee, and the educational outreach program we have just instituted in several of the less-favored alternatives, but it does not mention us at all in the Preferred Alternative. You might mention that you are proud of GGAS's involvement in the creation of the Refuge and that you hope the Service will add language to the Preferred Alternative indicating that there will be a role for GGAS and FAWR in the new Refuge.

*You can also e-mail your comments to the Service by sending them to: [rlplanning\\_guest@fws.gov](mailto:rlplanning_guest@fws.gov). Please type in "Alameda NWR" on the subject line.*

*If you use an attachment, please send it as an ASCII file.*

*If you have any questions, feel free to call Arthur Feinstein at the GGAS Office (510) 843-2222 or at home (415) 282-5937. Thanks again. }*



# 16, 1999

Charles Houghten, Chief  
Division of Refuge Planning (ARW/RPL)  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
911 NE 11th Ave  
Portland, OR 97232-4181

Dear Mr. Houghten:

I am writing you in strong support of Alternative C (the Preferred Alternative) of the "Draft Environmental Assessment for Establishment and Management of Alameda National Wildlife Refuge." Adoption of Alternative C will ensure the creation of the Alameda National Wildlife Refuge, and it will provide a strong, scientifically based management program.

I am particularly appreciative of your intention to double the Least Tern colony and to enhance the Caspian Tern colony. However, to enhance the Caspian Tern colony, you may need to create new wetlands on the landfill adjacent to the West Wetland. This cannot be done unless the Navy removes all contaminants from that area. Please make wetland restoration on the landfill site one of the goals of Alternative C, and please indicate in Alternative C that the Service insists that the US Navy remove all the contaminants found in that landfill. Capping the landfill is not a satisfactory solution.

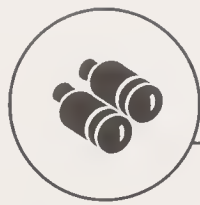
I also urge you to add to Alternative C your intention to patrol by boat the open waters within the Refuge boundaries and also the Breakwater Island. It is very important to ensure that the birds and mammals (harbor seals) inhabiting Breakwater Island are free from human disturbance.

Finally, I am proud of the role that Golden Gate Audubon Society (GGAS) has played in the creation of the Refuge and know that its Friends of Alameda Wildlife Refuge (FAWR) committee has established an educational outreach program that is based on the wildlife found at the Refuge. I am disappointed that Alternative C does not propose any role for GGAS and its FAWR committee, and I hope that you will add language indicating the Service's desire to work with GGAS in providing the best possible nature interpretive and educational programs to Alameda and the greater Bay Area community.

Thanks again for creating this wonderful Refuge.

Sincerely yours,

**Your letter will make a difference. It will help the Service pick the right alternative and help make the Refuge better. Please write. At right is a short sample letter.**



December 1 - 31, 1998

A week of unusually cold weather the week before Christmas may have contributed to below-average Christmas Bird Count (CBC) species numbers for some Northern California locales. Again this month, however, the number of review species (10) was high, adding substantial interest to the year's last offerings.

#### Abbreviations for Observers

EA, Edward Aaronson; KA, Ken Archibaud; FB, Florence Bennett; JB, Joelle Buffa; AC, Anthony Cermak; LC, Luke Cole; HC, Hugh Cotter; GD, Gary Deghi; DD, David DeSante; ED, Elizabeth Dicky; MD, Matthew Dodder; TE, Todd Easterla; PE, Paul Eastman; AE, Al Eisner; GE, Graham Ethrington; ME, Mike Feighner; HF, Harry Fuller; SG, Steve Glover; PG, Phil Gordon; TG, Tom Gray; SH, Steve Hampton; KH, Keith Hansen; AH, Alice Hoak; DH, David Hoffer; AJ, Al Jaramillo; AK, Anna Kopitov; AKr, Andy Kratter; EL, Earl Lebow; BL, Bill Lenarz; JL, Jim Lomax; CL, Calvin Lou; TL, Tom Lowe; MOb, Many Observers; PM, Peter Metropulos; CM, Clyde Morris; RM, Roger Muscat; CN, Christy Nelson; DN, Dan Nelson; ObU, Observer Unlisted; MP, Mike Parmeter; MPE, Mark Peterson; RR, Richard Redmond; BR, Bob Richmond; MR, Mike Rogers; JR, Joost Romeu; SR, Steve Rottenborn; SRv, Steve Rovell; AR, Andrew Rush; BS, Barry Sauppe; JS, John Schick; DS, Don Schmoldt; DSI, Diane Sierra; DLSH, Debra Love Shearwater; RS, Rich Stallcup; JSI, John Sterling; GS, Grace Steurer; TS, Tim Steurer; LS, Lang Stevenson; DSI, Dan Stoebel; DSu, David Suddjian; RT, Ron Thorn; BT, Bob Tintle; DT, Dorothy Tobkin; JT, John Trochet; GW, Gloria Walker; AW, Alan White; JW, Jerry White; AWi, Anna Wilcox; DW, Dan Williams; DWi, David Wimpfheimer; RW, Roger Wolf

#### Abbreviations for Counties and Others

ALA, Alameda; ALP, Alpine; BUT, Butte; CC, Contra Costa; CBC, Christmas Bird Count; CBRC, California Bird Records Committee; ED, El Dorado; GGP, Golden Gate Park; HUM, Humboldt; LAK, Lake; MRN, Marin; MEN, Mendocino; MER, Merced; MTY, Monterey; MPRBA, Monterey Peninsula Rare Bird Alert; NAP, Napa; PLA, Placer; PRN, Point Reyes National Seashore; SAC, Sacramento; SF, San Francisco; SM, San Mateo; SCL, Santa Clara; SCZ, Santa Cruz; SOL, Solano; SON, Sonoma; TRI, Trinity; YOL, Yolo

## Grebes to Ducks

A Red-necked Grebe seen at Folsom Lake, ED, Dec. 12, was at an uncommon mountain location (TE). On Dec. 7, the Laysan Albatross returned for a 5th winter to Point Arena, MEN (GS, EA, DSI), and was seen through at least Dec. 27. Its arrival was about a week later than usual. A Dec. 21



Monterey pelagic trip, MTY, recorded 6 Black-footed Albatross (DLSH). The major find that day was a 1st-year **Short-tailed Albatross** (*Phoebastria albatrus*), found 3.2 mi WSW of Pt. Pinos (DLSH). This species, a plume-hunting casualty, is extremely rare, with only a few hundred birds worldwide, a comeback from a low of about 10 pair in 1953 (Harris, 1983). Other reports from the pelagic trip included 4 Pink-footed, 70 Short-tailed, and 38 Black-vented Shearwaters (DLSH). A White-faced Ibis, not often on the coast, especially in winter, was at Coyote Hills Regional Park, ALA, Dec. 27 (MD). Although Ross' Goose is consid-

ered uncommon on the coast, at least 30 individuals were reported from Alameda, Mendocino, Marin, Monterey, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Sonoma counties during the period. Two reports of individual Brant were from unusual locations, at Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Ponds, SCL, Dec. 12-13 (SR, TG), and at Moss Landing, MTY, Dec. 11 (MPRBA).

**Trumpeter Swans** (*Cygnus buccinator*) were reported from 2 locations. The first sighting was at E. Catlett and Brewer Rds., PLA, Dec. 22 (ObU), where an adult bird had a green neck collar, indicating it was one of those transplanted to the Summer Lake/Malheur, Oregon, location. With it was a probable immature bird, both with a large group of Tundra Swans. Five other Trumpeters, 2 adults and 3 juveniles, were on Clair Engle Lake, TRI, Dec. 29 (MF).

A high count for Wood Ducks was 17 at Lake Solano, SOL, Dec. 6 (PG), and at least 22 Eurasian Wigeons were found over Alameda, Humboldt, Mendocino, Monterey, Santa Clara, and Sonoma counties, with the largest group of 6 males seen near the Alviso Salt Ponds A9/A10, SCL, Dec. 20 (SR). A male "Eurasian" Green-winged Teal was on Alviso Salt Pond A9, Dec. 12 (MR). Two reports of Tufted Duck were a female on Lake Merritt, ALA, Dec. 9-20 (AWi, GE, CL), and a male and female at the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant ponds, SCL, Dec. 12 (SR), where



the male remained through Dec. 21 (TG, MR). Individual Harlequin Ducks were found at Princeton Harbor mouth, SM, Dec. 1 (BS fide RT), off Chimney Rock, PRNS, Dec. 5 (AE), and in Monterey Harbor, MTY, Dec. 11-29, possibly the same bird that has frequented the area in past years (MPRBA). Four to 6 Harlequins were also at Glass Beach/MacKerricher State Park, MEN, Dec. 17-24 (DT). An unusual inland location for a White-winged Scoter was off Pacific Heights Rd., Chico, BUT, Dec. 25



(RR). Oldsquaws were reported from 4 locations: 1 at Bodega Harbor, SON, Dec. 1 & 19 (FB, DN), 2 on the Bay east of Millbrae Ave, SM, Dec. 6 (RT), 1 at Princeton Harbor, SM, Dec. 8 (AH), and 1 at MacKerricher State Pk., MEN, Dec. 24 (DT). Seventeen or more Hooded Mergansers were spotted in Alameda, Contra Costa, El Dorado, and Sonoma counties.

*Continued on page 10*

## Warbler Sightings

### Prothonotary Warbler

Dec. 1,5 Cosumnes R. Prsrv., SAC JT

### Golden-winged Warbler

Dec. 26 Pescadero Rd, SM JL

### Tennessee Warbler

Dec. 1,6 Bodega Bay, SON FB,DN

Dec. 2-4 Pt. Reyes Station, MRN RS

Dec. 6 Bodega Bay, SON DN

Dec. 11,19 Bodega Bay, SON MP, DN

Dec. 19 Pt. Reyes Station, MRN

fide DWi

Dec. 20 Lake Merritt, ALA fide GE

### Nashville Warbler

Dec. 8 Half Moon Bay, SM AJ

Dec. 11 Pacific Grove, MTY MPRBA

Dec. 27 Merrie Way, SF PM

Dec. 26 Skyline Blvd, SF PM

Dec. 25 N. Lake, GGP, SF AR

Dec. 22,31 Carmel Mission, MTYMPRBA

### Lucy's Warbler

Dec. 6 Pacific Grove, MTY MPRBA

Dec. 13,15,25 L. Merced, SF HC, GD, DN

Dec. 27 Half Moon Bay, SM RT

### Northern Parula

(seen 1st Nov. 12)

Dec. 4 Laguna Grande Pk., MTY  
MPRBA

### Black-and-white Warbler

Dec. 6 Pescadero, SM AE

Dec. 9 Soquel Creek, SCZ DSu

Dec. 19(4) Arcata, HUM fide JS

Dec. 20,25 Lake Merritt, ALA fide GE, JS

Dec. 24 Pt. Richmond, CC DS

Dec. 29 Cosumnes R. Prsrv., SAC JS

### Cape May Warbler

(seen 1st Sept. 27)

Dec. 25,26 Pacific Grove, MTY MPRBA

### Grace's Warbler

Dec.12,29-31 Jack's Peak Regl. Pk., MTY  
BT

### Prairie Warbler

Dec. 22-30 Owl Canyon, SON MP, DH,  
AW

### Palm Warbler

Dec. 4 Pt. Pinos, MTY MPRBA

Dec. 6 L. Merced, SF PM

Dec. 6 Owl Canyon, SON MP

Dec. 20 Alameda, ALA CM, JB

Dec. 25 Half Moon Bay, SM CN

Dec. 26 Half Moon Bay, SM LS

Dec. 29 Carmel, MTY MPRBA

Dec. 29-31 Pacific Grove, MTY MPRBA

### Yellow Warbler

Dec. 6-26 L. Merced, SF PM

Dec. 11 San Lorenzo R., SCZ TL

### Wilson's Warbler

Dec. 4 Laguna Grande Park, Seaside,  
MTY

MPRBA

Dec. 20 Near Hwy 128,YOL DSt

Dec. 19 Inverness, MRN fide DWi

Dec. 25 Bodega Bay, SON DN

### Northern Waterthrush

Dec. 13-14 Rodman Slough, Nice, LAK  
JW, JSt

(1st county record)

Dec. 24 San Anselmo, MRN BL

Dec. 29 Carmel R., MTY MPRBA

Continued from page 9

## Condors to Gulls

Exciting to see were 5 of the released California Condors in Pfeiffer-Big Sur State Park, MTY, Dec. 20 (SRv, MOB). Birders wish them success in the New Year! A juvenile Swainson's Hawk reported last month was still in Half Moon Bay, SM, Dec. 6, 12 & 26 (AE, AJ, MF). Two Ferruginous Hawks were along Hwy. 1 N of San Gregorio Beach, SM, Dec. 12 (MD); 1 was at Arcata, HUM, for the CBC, Dec. 19 (fide JSt); 1 was



seen near Salmon Creek, SON, Dec. 19 (DN); and a 4th was near Scott Rd., SAC, Dec. 31 (TS). Black Oystercatchers continued at their unusual location at the "Albany Bulb" and Pt. Isabel, ALA, Dec. 20 & 23 (Oakland CBC, KA). The Rock Sandpiper remained at MacKerricher State Park, MEN, Dec. 23 (DT). The probable 1st-winter **Slaty-backed Gull** (*Larus schistisagus*) reported Nov. 3-27 was seen again Dec. 5 at the Davis Oxidation Ponds, YOL (SH). A 2nd-winter Laughing Gull was at the Baylands Duck Pond, Palo Alto, SCL, Dec. 26 & 27 (GW). An adult **Lesser Black-backed**

**Gull** (*Larus fuscus*) at both Coyote Creek Lagoon, SM, and in Alviso, SCL, Dec. 4 (BR, SR), was probably the same bird reported in Alviso during November. On Dec. 20, a 3rd-winter Lesser Black-backed Gull arrived at Lake Cunningham, San Jose, SCL, undoubtedly the same individual as the 2nd-winter bird there last winter (SR). Reports of individual Glaucous Gulls came from Alameda, Humboldt, Sacramento, Santa Clara, and San Mateo counties. Twelve Black Skimmers remained at their long-time post at Charleston Slough, SCL, Dec. 3 (GE); an immature bird was at Moss Landing, MTY, Dec. 11 (EL); and 3 were noted at Elkhorn Slough, MTY, Dec. 29 (MPRBA).



## Hummingbirds to Waxwings

A rare wintering Allen's Hummingbird was found in Redwood Regional Park, ALA, for the Oakland CBC (fide GE). A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, a rare but regular fall and winter visitor to California, with most found near the coast (Small, 1994), was

reported in GGP, SF, Dec. 26 (JR fide LC). A Vermilion Flycatcher, a rare winter visitor, with most records in southern California,



was at San Luis National Wildlife Refuge, MER, Dec. 12 (PE). Again this month, there were reports of the **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** (*Myiarchus tuberculifer*). Apparently there were 2 birds about 2 mi apart in Sonoma County, with 1 at Bodega Bay Dec. 23, 24 & 27 (MP, DN) and another at Bodega Dunes Campground Dec. 23 & 29 (DN, MP, DH, MOB). An Ash-throated Flycatcher, uncommon in winter, was near Abbott's Lagoon, PRNS, MRN, Dec. 19 (fide DWi). A Tropical Kingbird was first reported Dec. 2 at Hidden Valley Park, Martinez, CC, and continued through at least Dec. 29, only the 2nd county record (ED, MOB). Perhaps the bird-of-the-month was a **Thick-billed Kingbird** (*Tyrannus crassirostris*), first seen Dec. 19 in Half Moon Bay, SM (AKr, GD), where it stayed until at least Dec. 25 (MOB). This species is a tropical breeder, found commonly in the United States only in SE Arizona and an



extremely rare visitor to California. If accepted, this report would be only the 2nd record for Northern California and the first in 25 years. Individual Cassin's Vireos, uncommon in winter, were seen Dec. 19 at Arcata, HUM (fide JSt), and at Pt. Reyes Station, MRN (fide DWi). An unusual winter Barn Swallow was at Fort Ord, MTY, Dec. 29 (MPRBA). A flock of 17 Bohemian Waxwings, rare in December, was reported from Indian Creek Reservoir, ALP, Dec. 16 (JL).

## Wood Warblers to Finches

Wood Warbler reports, although certainly fewer than the last 2 months, included 2 CBRC review species and some lingering Yellow and Wilson's Warblers, which are rare in winter (see chart). The Northern Waterthrush



was a 1st record for Lake County. The **Golden-winged Warbler** (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) an eastern U.S. species, is extremely rare in winter anywhere in the state. Another candidate for bird-of-

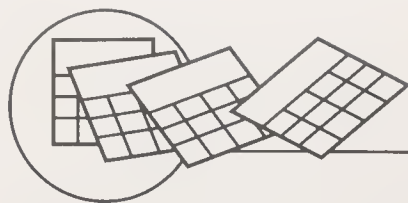
the-month was the **Grace's Warbler** (*Dendroica graciae*), a bird of the southeastern U.S. mountain forests, with only a few winter records in the state, all from Southern California (Small, 1994). This sighting was a 1st Monterey County record.



Two Summer Tanagers were reported, the first at Antonelli Pond, SCZ, Dec. 17-19 (RW, AK), and another at Dominican College, San Rafael, MRN, Dec. 29 (RS). Four Clay-colored Sparrows were seen, at Hall Ranch, PRNS, MRN, Dec. 5 (AE); at San Bruno, SM, Dec. 6 (RT); at Arcata, HUM, Dec. 19 (fide JS); and in Vacaville, SOL, Dec. 25 (RM). The only Vesper Sparrow report was a single bird at Sierra Rd. Summit, SCL, Dec. 20 (SR). Two Sage Sparrows were near the summit of Pine Mountain, MRN, Dec. 29 (RS). Unusual was a group of ~25 "Slate-colored" Fox Sparrows (*schistacea* race) with an equal number of "Sooties," (or *malaschensis* race) at the same Pine Mt. location (RS). On Dec. 28, a Lark Bunting was on Cholame Valley Rd., MTY (MPRBA). There

were reports of 11 Swamp Sparrows over Contra Costa, Monterey, San Francisco, and Santa Clara counties and 18 White-throated Sparrows in Contra Costa, Monterey, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, and Yuba counties. Harris' Sparrow, a rare winter visitor, averaging about 7 records per winter (Small, 1994), was at the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, SCL, Dec. 12 (MPe). A **Snow Bunting** (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) was found at Redondo Beach, Half Moon Bay, SM, Dec. 1 (BS fide RT). A **Common Grackle** (*Quiscalus quiscula*), extremely rare in Northern California, was in Pt. Reyes Station, MRN, Dec. 13 & 14 (DD, KH, RS).

Orioles were reported all over the place. The Orchard Oriole found last month was seen again at North Lake, GGP, SF, Dec. 12-30 (HF fide HC, MOB). Another Orchard Oriole was in Bodega Bay, SON, Dec. 23, 27 & 29 (DW, MP, DH). A Hooded Oriole, uncommon in winter, was in Sonoma, SON, Dec. 19 (AC). A Baltimore Oriole continued at North Lake, GGP, SF, Dec. 23-30 (SG, MOB), and another was at Rio Park, Carmel, Dec. 22-31 (MPRBA). At least 11 late Bullock's Orioles were reported over Humboldt, Monterey, San Francisco, Santa Clara, San Mateo, and Sonoma counties. Finally, uncommon for the location in December were 2 Cassin's Finches on Hwy. 128, NAP, Dec. 20 (DSt).



## February Meeting

### Mono Lake and the Promise of Tomorrow's Water

A slide presentation and discussion by Bartshe Miller, Mono Lake Committee Education Director

Strange mineral towers, millions of migratory birds, and trillions of brine shrimp and alkali flies inspired a fresh approach to a classic western water showdown. What does the future hold for Mono Lake? How did this remote



Thursday, February 18, 1999

7:30 p.m.

Northbrae Community Church

941 The Alameda, Berkeley

Great Basin lake change environmental history?

Join us for a positive look at the natural and human landscape of "Mono Lake and the Promise of Tomorrow's Water." Slides and discussion will be the focus as we journey to the Mono Basin to investigate unique natural history and simple solutions to old water problems.

*The Mono Lake Committee is a nonprofit citizen's group dedicated to protecting and restoring the Mono Basin ecosystem, educating the public about Mono Lake and the impacts on the environment of excessive water use, and promoting cooperative solutions that protect Mono Lake and meet real water needs without transferring environmental problems to other areas.*

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